



## Weekly Activity Update

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### Strengthening the Government

#### Enhancing Afghan civil society

A strong civil society in Afghanistan will create stability, build local government accountability, and provide a public framework for upcoming national elections. The I-PACS (Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society) program, launched in January 2005, focuses on building a strong, sustainable civil society in Afghanistan by supporting the enactment of a NGO law, capacity building through training and mentoring, and small grant funding for CSOs (Civil Society Organizations). CSOs include, but are not limited to: NGOs, social and cultural organizations, associations, shuras (community elders), CDCs (Community Development Councils), women and youth groups, unions, and cooperatives.

An initial civil society assessment will inform program direction. Twenty-two Afghans were trained in survey, interview, and focus group techniques and are currently working in 22 selected provinces. The assessment will be completed by the end of the April and will be shared broadly. Also this month, after several weeks of intense meetings, the draft NGO law was submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for consideration. This law will set guidelines and establish a structure for the NGO community. Last month, the I-PACS program began an assessment of capacity building needs. The findings, currently under review, will steer the goals and plan for organizational development support to local CSOs. Also, I-PACS awarded its first grant for \$2,200 to Afghan Peace-Seeker Women Council (APWC) for an event celebrating International Women's Day. Contracts for 3 additional grants are in process.



*The I-PACS program aims to strengthen Civil Society Organizations (CSO). Shuras, like the Kot shura shown above, are one type of CSOs. Others include NGOs, youth groups, cultural organizations, and unions.*



*Part of LCEP's literacy campaign includes teacher training, where lead teachers are trained and, in turn, train local teachers. Above is a session involving lead teachers.*

### Empowering Communities

#### Building capacity in rural Afghan communities

The Literacy and Community Empowerment Program (LCEP) will provide Afghan communities with the tools and knowledge to support themselves in the areas of literacy, governance and economic growth. Over the next two years, this innovative, sustainable and community-driven model for rural village development will work in 200 communities in five targeted provinces. LCEP will offer a literacy program for community members and provide training to the newly-organized Afghan Community Development Councils (CDCs.) To promote economic growth, LCEP will teach community members how to organize local savings banks and micro-enterprise activities. A new national Literacy Learning Center in Kabul will serve as the hub of the program's tools and training development. Lastly, LCEP will help advance the practice of monitoring and evaluation in development projects by providing training for Afghan professionals in the field.



*LCEP female lead teachers at the training session.*

## Creating Conditions for Stability

### Bridge to connect communities and end conflict

Kakrag village is in a remote and mountainous area in central Afghanistan that is home to Hazaras and Tajiks. In consultation with both Tajik and Hazara communities, USAID identified a bridge and retaining wall as high-priority needs for both communities. Because there was no bridge to cross the river, people from the Hazara village, located above Kakrag, were forced to cross the Tajik villagers' farmland with their carts. Since the continual traffic across the farmland damaged the fields and crops, relations between the Hazaras and the Tajiks in the area were strained.

The bridge was successfully completed and awaits hand-over to the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in Bamiyan. Both communities are pleased with the construction of the bridge and retaining wall, which alleviated tensions between two ethnic groups.



*The foundation of a bridge in Bamiyan Province which serves as both useful infrastructure as well as a mediation mechanism for two ethnic groups.*

## Security Incidents

*Note: Hostile attacks are reported through USAID's security contractors and the Associated Press*

- **Number of Hostile Attacks:** During this reporting period, there were six hostile attacks resulting in 32 injuries, five deaths, and one kidnapping.
- **USAID Related:** During this reporting period, there was no hostile attack directly affecting USAID related projects and/or staff. There were six other attacks against other aid agencies and NGOs.
- **Latest Attack:** On March 17 in Kandahar City experienced two explosions. Around 11am, an IED (Improvised Explosive Device) was detonated, killing 5 civilians and wounding 32 others, including 3 women. WFP (World Food Programme) and UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) vehicles had just passed by the area, the WFP vehicle was damaged, but there were no casualties or injuries reported for either agency. One person was arrested and taken to custody for investigation. Earlier that morning, an IED was detonated near a UNOPS (United Nations Office for Project Services) vehicle. The vehicle was slightly damaged, but no one was injured.

